

TUESDAY MORNING, MAY 23

[Correspondence of the State Sentinel.]
OVERLAND TRIP TO CALIFORNIA.Alkaline Districts of the Pacific—the
Internal Wealth of Nevada—How to
Make Money in Silver Mining, &c.

AUSTIN, NEVADA, TER., April 26, 1865.

ED SENTINEL: Coming from the grain fields and blooming orchards of California to the barren hills and sandy wastes of Nevada, it can hardly be expected that I should go into details over the "delightful" prospect which now greets me. You can have no just conception, except upon view, of the picture of desolation presented in this inhospitable region. A dreary winter, with daily visitation of howling tempests, broken only by snow-capped mountains, lifting high, oftentimes, their whitered crests among the clouds, with scarce any communication with the great world, and the most of the country being a gloomy monotony, inconceivable by the happy denizens of the fertile prairies and shady woodlands of the "States."

Most of your readers have no conception of an "alkali flat." I will attempt a facile explanation. From the Eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, far into Oregon on the North, and Southward into Mexico, in a greater or less degree, alkaline deposits, consisting mainly of common salt, alum and soda, are found intermingled with the common soil. In the Great Basin—a district comprised within the Rocky and Sierra Mountains, extending from the interior of Idaho to the Mountains skirting the Colorado river—and in the valleys among the Black Hills East of the South Pass, these deposits frequently crop out into lakes, encrusted with white crystals, presenting a surface like that of a snow-bank; and wagon-wheels passing over them, cut through this surface, making a "crackling" noise resembling that made in going over frozen snow. In some instances, these crystals are almost pure salt; in others, saleratus, fit for use in raising bread and dyspepsia. In crossing these lakes of a hot summer's day, the sun, reflecting from myriads of crystals, inflames the eyes, and envelops in an atmosphere of stifling heat, the unfortunate wayfarer. For that reason, they are usually crossed at night in the hot months.

In other places, instead of water, filtering through the alkaline soil, pure to speedily drench the animal that ventures there to take its thirst. The water of these pools is of a lake color and consistency, and when taken into the system, quickly corrodes them unless neutralized by fatty matter or acids.

Where these salts do not crop out into crystals, they are found intermingled with sand and soil; and, in the dry season, great clouds of dust, thus composed, sweep over the plains like a simoon. In the valley of San Jose, California, in certain localities, the alkali rises to the surface, streaking it with a whitish color. Beets and cabbages are said to draw out and absorb it. Small grain, such as wheat, barley and oats, grow readily in alkaline soil. So do various fruits. But this productiveness must be developed by abundant moisture; and, where irrigation is not resorted to, such soils refuse to yield. The dust, which inflames eyes, throat and lungs, and the water, impregnated more or less with these salts, hard, often brackish, and of a corrosive tendency, will prevent these alkalis from being of any desirable places of residence. Exposed to the dust, the skin scales off, the hair becomes harsh, and leather is soon "furred up." Here, in Nevada, springs high up in the mountains are pure, while those taken from the bottom of an arid character, are more or less alkaline.

However repulsive this bleak region may be to one desirous of permanent residence, it is not so in mineral wealth. Silver ledges, ranging in thickness from a few feet to fifty feet, are found in all the mountain ranges, from the South Pass to the Sierras. Gold-bearing quartz and cinnabar are occasionally found. Salt, in native crystals, fit for use, abounds in convenient localities. The silver ore is found in veins of quartz. Before the silver can be disengaged this rock must be crushed, to which probably requires mills, costing from \$30,000 to \$100,000. It rarely happens that a silver mine is profitable until the water level is reached. This takes great labor, and frequently no little capital. Hedges have "broken" and "pitched" in them, where considerable outlay must be made before they are profitable. Ores in shafts and tunnels are not infrequently, and these consume expense and delay. Hoisting machines, propelled by steam power, very soon become a necessity. All their causes, with others of a similar character, make the business, when conducted by individual enterprise, without capital, extremely precarious. Hence, the experienced miner who locates a claim now, calculates to sell out to capitalists without consuming his time and means in fruitless and impoverishing efforts to develop.

Gradually all the desirable locations are passing into the hands of capitalists, who rarely fail to make them pay handsomely. There is no more room for the investor of capital than in Nevada. Judiciously employed it cannot fail to be productive beyond any investment in the States. Take, for example, a twenty stamp mill, with all the necessary machinery, necessary to reduce the ore to bullion, with good buildings, ready for operation, all complete, costing here \$75,000. Such a mill will yield a profit of from \$500 to \$700 per day; thus in one year, pay for itself and yielding an enormous dividend to its owners. These are practical results, not new fancies. They are realized by all such mills throughout the mining districts, where they are controlled by industrious and prudent management. One hundred times as many more mills could be profitably employed within a radius of fifty miles from this place. Those gentlemen who have a plethora of greenbacks, and are seeking a safer or more profitable investment than by organizing companies, buying mills and sending them out here, with competent agents to operate them. These mills can be readily purchased in San Francisco, or they can be sent here by the route from the Missouri river by mule teams, in about ten weeks at less cost.

The news of the assassination of Lincoln excited universal sorrow on the Pacific coast. He had become especially endeared to Democrats by his conciliatory course during the last few months of his life. Sad, indeed, is the hour in American history, when the Chief Magistrate of the Nation is stricken down by the hands of an assassin. But the spirit which lurked in the breast of the murderer and incited him to the diabolical deed was called up by those pestiferous party newspapers who, ignoring law and bidding Constitutions down, have been sedulously taught the mob to appreciate their power, and directed their fury against their political opponents to crush them out. In rebellion, the tyranny of Jeff Davis evoked it; and at the North, the facility with which human life is taken and sacred rights trampled in the dust, for mere party purposes, has fostered it, until crime has lost its terrors. The loosening of the bonds of society in one place relaxes them in another, and the result is general demoralization.

Nowhere on this continent is there so much intolerance of political opinion as on this coast. McDowell plays the petty tyrant, issuing ukases at pleasure, abrogating well established constitutional and municipal law, declaring that which he likes to speak or write disrespectful of the president, locking up printing offices and imprisoning editors, not for treason, but for differing with him in political sentiment. "The chicken will come back to roost." Some day another party will be in power, and it will, in like manner, attempt to trample free thought, and so will go from one step to another to anarchy, or to an acknowledged despotism. FAR WEST.

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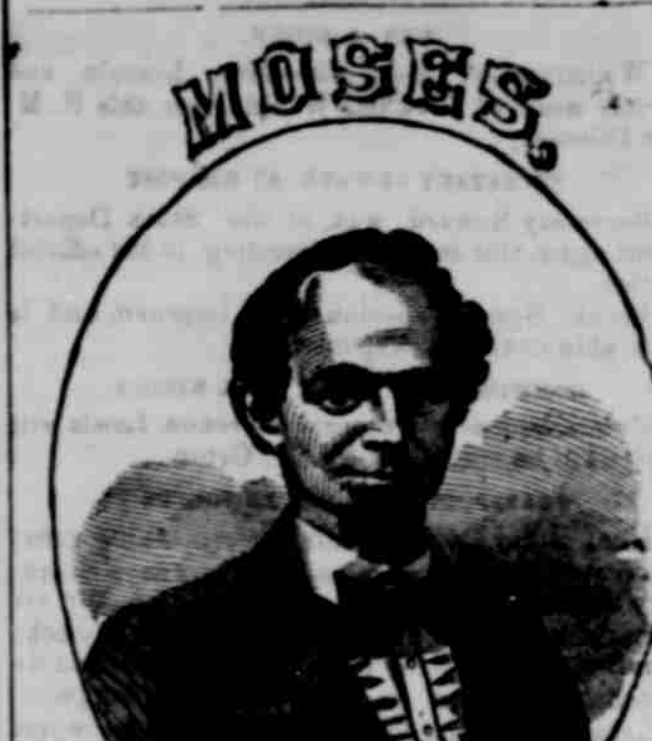
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